



THE HAKHEL COMMUNITY AWARENESS BULLETIN

Reviewed by HaRav Yisroel Belsky, Shlita

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Opportunity Knocks. If you start learning Mishnayos Megillah on the fourth day of Adar (Thursday, February 26th) and learn just three Mishnayos a day (after Maariv, with your son, etc.), you will complete the entire mesechta on Purim, **and** if you then continue to learn Mishnayos Pesachim starting on Purim (it is a mitzvah to begin learning Hilchos Pesach **on** Purim, as brought in the Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 429; Mishne Berurah seif katan 2), you will complete Mishnayos Pesachim before Pesach!

Yeshivas Mordechai HaTzadik. B'EH, Hakhel intends to once again host the great yeshivah- Yeshivas Mordechai HaTzadik in America nationwide. If your shul would like to participate in this Purim learning opportunity (Yes—learning on Purim!), please promptly contact 718-253-5497.

Pre-Washed Vegetables. The proliferation of pre-washed vegetables with colorful stickers in Hebrew affixed to their packaging has created confusion in the Kashrus community. Romaine lettuce, which until recently was thought to be off-limits to the serious Kosher consumer, is now available in overabundance. A more careful review of the Kashrus standards behind the pre-washed vegetable proliferation may reveal some shocking results:

- Double and triple hashgachos may in some cases mean that the one or two hashgachos are relying on a third hashgocha to check the vegetables.
- Of the two to three tons that may be processed in a given period, 100 pounds or less may actually be checked for infestation.
- One hashgacha, because of pressure from a national manufacturer, has changed its supervision schedule from Hashgocha Temidis to a once-every-ten-days visit (notwithstanding that truckloads of Romaine may have arrived and been processed in the interim without anyone checking them).
- On one “triple hashgacha sticker”, when one of the “more reliable” hashgachas doesn't like the infestation that it sees, it removes its name from the stickers and permits one of the rabbis to appear on the product with his own private sticker (whose color and shape is similar to the original stickers) until the infestation level is reduced, at which time the joint hashgocha reappears.

We note that eating one insect involves six Torah prohibitions and causes **timtum halev**. It is no wonder then that prominent Rabbonim have advised their congregants not to consume **any** pre-washed Romaine lettuce, notwithstanding the language, beauty and color of the stickers that grace these pre-washed vegetable products.

Weight Lost—at a Very High Cost. Nutritional drinks and supplements have become an extremely popular method of weight control and reduction. While little or no preparation is needed for these easy-to-consume drinks, their ingredients and their manufacture are actually among the most complex in the entire food industry. A kashrus expert examining the label of one of these drinks noted **six** different ingredients which could be completely **unkosher**. A label claiming “all vegetable” ingredients may well be meaningless from a kashrus standpoint for reasons beyond the scope of this article. A **recognized** Hashgacha, i.e., a Hashgacha which employs experienced

mashgichim with the resources to research ingredients and to set up and inspect kosher plants, **is essential** for this product. A nutritional drink for which hashgacha is provided by a local individual rabbi, which is accepted merely because “everybody uses it” and the doctor recommending it and/or selling it or providing samples, is “frum” and “learns” may, in reality, be completely unkosher, because of the lack of knowledge of what otherwise may be a well-intentioned individual certifying rabbi lacking kashrus acumen, and the desire of the manufacturer (and otherwise observant doctors associating themselves with the products from which they may derive monetary benefit) to save money in hashgacha fees. When buying products designed to help your physical body stay healthy, be careful not to destroy your soul in the process.

Chapstick. Chapstick and other lip protection products may contain non-kosher ingredients. We are advised that there is a new kosher product on the market for lip protection.

What is the Brocha?

A. *Canoli* is a cookie-style roll wrapped around ice cream. Based upon the ruling of HaRav Moshe Feinstein Z'TL (*Igros Moshe*, Orach Chayim 4:23), it would seem that a canoli would follow the same principle as an ice cream sandwich, and would require two brachos.

B. *Sushi*. There are two types of sushi most commonly served to the Kosher consumer; Maki (the Sushi roll) and Nigiri (an oblong shaped finger of rice covered by a piece of fish). Although sushi products have been available for a number of years, very little discussion exists as to their appropriate brachos. Because sushi products generally involve a mixture of food items (sushi literally refers to the rice - sashimi is the actual term for the fish), e.g., fish, rice, vegetables and fruit, the Ikar/Tafel rules must be applied.

Maki sushi contains strips of fish or vegetables rolled in rice and wrapped in crisp, thin sheets of dried seaweed. As all items are wrapped together and eaten together and no one item can be deemed as merely enhancing another item, *i.e.*, the Maki connoisseur enjoys the combination of all ingredients present, one should make the brocha on the majority ingredient, which is usually the rice (thus a Mezonos), which will exempt all of the other ingredients. If one cannot discern which ingredient is in the majority, e.g., the fish or the rice, one should obtain a Mezonos product and a Shehakol product and make brachos on those with the intent of exempting the Maki. If no other products are available, one should pull out a piece of rice and make a Mezonos, and then pull out a piece of fish, put it down in a separate location for a little bit, and then make a Shehakol on the fish with the intent of exempting the Maki. (See, e.g., *Sefer V'zos HaBracha* p. 94)

Nigiri, on the other hand, although eaten together, would not be considered a mixture; instead, it is treated as one food placed on another (as it is clearly discernible as two separate food items), both of which are desired. In such circumstances, according to the Mishne Berurah (Orach Chayim 168: seif katan 45), a Mezonos should be made first on the rice and then a Shehakol on the fish.

Ribis Alert. Please note that although the family which had owned approximately 13% of MBNA stock sold off about 5%, they still own (mother, daughter and son, who is also Chairman of the Board) approximately 7% of the bank's stock, which exceeds the 5% threshold of HaRav Moshe Feinstein Z'TL.

Forty Days. Many of us are familiar with the “segula” of davening (or having a shliach daven for you) at the Kosel for forty days in a row in order to obtain a particular yeshua that is needed. In fact, Rabbi Moshe Shternbuch, Shlita (*Teshuvos V'Hanhagos* 4:61) writes that this segula can be accomplished in any Bais HaMedrash or Bais Haknesses, if you expressly enter to daven for this particular need. The key to success is temidus (consistency and constancy) in a Makom Kadosh.

Note: Perhaps this very fact—that your shul can serve as your **Mikdash Me'at**—can reignite your sensitivity to your very own shul's kedusha.

Not a Two-Legged Animal. Why does man traverse on two legs, while animals walk on “all fours”? The *Orchos Tzadikim* (Shaar Yiras Shomayim) explains that all animals have only a **nefesh behemis**, and accordingly, they always look down, for their whole life is dedicated to this world's pursuits. Man, on the other hand, is blessed with a **neshama** which strives for its source in the heavens. However, man faces sideways, and does not naturally look up, because he always has the bechira chofshis as to whether he will look down as an animal—or look up as an angel!

Just a Minute, Please! The Gemora in Yoma (85A) which is brought l'halacha in Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim (329:4) requires one to be mechallel Shabbos to extend the life of another Yid—even if the chillul Shabbos will extend the life for just only one more minute. The sefer *Shaarei Orah* (page 23) writes that we see **how precious, halacha l'maasah**, one minute of a person's life is. What can be accomplished in a minute? The first parsha of S'hma, the six zichiros, Birchus HaTorah, to name just a few great mitzvos. The next time somebody asks you, "Got a minute?" or "Can I take a minute of your time?" perhaps your answer should be "I'm not so sure," for there are truly so many great things that one can accomplish in the "few minutes" that others may simply throw away. The word "minute" may come from the same source as minutiae, but in Yiddishkeit, its significance is great and, quite literally, everlasting. For life is not like treading water or just getting through the day—every minute is a very special opportunity.

Note of Appreciation. From the sefer *Chovos Halevovos*, we learn that there are three different reasons why a person does not appreciate all of the good and pleasures that he really has in his life:

- 1) His trials and tribulations which are difficult to navigate and blind him to the good that he experiences;
- 2) He is personally used to waking up every day with two eyes that see, two ears that hear, legs with which to walk, a roof over his head, clothes that give him dignity, warmth and protection, a brain that discerns, a hot coffee, a shining sun, a warm sweater, a pen to write with, a friend, a car, etc.; and
- 3) Everybody, or at least most people, enjoy the same benefits.

How can we train ourselves in HaKoras Hatov to HaKodush Borcu Hu? Here are a couple of ideas:

- Open and close your eyes a few times and think about what the world would be like if you were unable to see.
- While you are walking in the street, imagine that you **and only you** are the one who is able to walk with legs on the street, and breathe without the assistance of a machine.
- Would you exchange a functioning brain for \$250 million? \$1 billion? Think about it...and appreciate!

Dogfood? Chazal teach us (Pesachim 118A) that one who speaks **and one who accepts** Lashon Hora without attempting to guard himself from this grave sin is fit to be thrown to the dogs, as indicated by the intended proximity of the Lo Sa'se of Lashon Hora in the Torah to the words "to the dogs shall it be thrown (Shmo s 22:30)." The Rambam brings this Gemora L'Halacha in Hilchos Deos (7:3). The Sefer *Chofetz Chaim* also brings this L'Halacha both in Hilchos Loshon Hora (6:1) and Hilchos Rechilus (5:1). To indicate the severity of the crime for which the Torah teaches that being thrown to the dogs is the punishment, we need only point to the house of Achav and to the wicked queen Izevel, the perpetrator of the mass murder of Neviim, whose bodies were eaten by the dogs (Melachim I 21:23,24). This is **not** very good company!

Note: We can now better understand why **OUR VERY FIRST PERSONAL TEFILA** at the conclusion of Shemone Esrei is **Elokai N'zor Leshoni Mera**.

If you need a Shemiras Halashon Yomi calendar, where you learn two short halachos a day (Hebrew and English), please send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to us as soon as possible, as a new cycle has recently commenced. Other books, such as Artscroll's *The Chofetz Chaim Companion*, have a study schedule contained within the text. For Shemiras HaLashon shailos, the Chofetz Chaim Heritage Foundation's Shemiras HaLashon hotline can be reached at 718-951-3696.

Sleeping with Shoes. The Gemora (Yoma 78B) teaches that if a person sleeps with his shoes on, he has tasted the taste of death. In fact, the sefer *Shmiras Haguf V'Hanefesh* (Vol. I, page 344) brings from HaRav Yosef Chaim Sonnefeld Z'TL (*Salmas Chayim* 2:122) that if one has been cursed in some way with death, he should fulfill and eliminate the curse by sleeping with his shoes on! HaRav Sonnenfeld also writes that one should be makpid to take off children's shoes when they go to sleep, as well. HaRav Chaim Kanievsky, Shlita, also concurs with this, but based on the premise that sleeping with shoes is considered kashe l'shichacha (causes one to forget one's Torah learning). HaRav Kanievsky writes that this would be true even for a child who has not yet learned, because it will instill in him a teva (predisposition) of forgetfulness within him which would R'L hurt the child.

Antartica. The Chofetz Chaim (*Shem Olam*, Chapter 19) brings from the Arizal that the power of **ten individual Yidden** who gather together to do a mitzvah is equivalent to the strength of **ten kitos (groupings) of**

angels. Why are we so much more powerful? Because, the Chofetz Chaim explains, it is easy to be a servant to the King in his palace. But when you are sent on an expeditionary mission in the service of the King, there are so many ways, means and reasons to falter in His service. It is for this very reason that when the expeditionary force is successful, they are showered by the King's love and respect to a much greater extent than those in his palace, for with their very lives did they demonstrate their devotion and sincerity to the King's service. It is, of course, our neshamos which would otherwise have been spiritual servants of Hashem on high, who have been thrust into this frosty, cold, gashmios world to accomplish great tasks. Always keeping our tasks and goal in mind, and insulating ourselves warmly from the tundra and varying storms around us, we can (and must) accomplish our task in a relatively short time. Upon our arrival back at the palace, all of the storm and emergency gear will be replaced by clothing of grandeur and majesty, each person just exactly in accordance with his accomplishments on the trip.

Tzedaka During Davening. As we know, one should give tzedaka prior to davening, as the posuk states "Ani B'Tzedek Echezeh Ponecha (Tehillim 17:15). The Mishne Berurah (Orach Chayim 51: seif katan 19) also brings that when reciting "V'ata Moshel Bakol" in Pesukei Dezimrah, the Arizal would give money for tzedaka. But what is the halacha concerning people asking for tzedaka who come to you (i) during Pesukei Dezimrah, and (2) during Birchas K'rias Shema and during K'riyas Shema itself? Are you permitted to disturb your davening to take out your wallet, or change out of our pocket, or wait as they make change for you? According to Rabbi Moshe Shternbuch, Shlita (*Teshuvos V'Hanhagos* 3:287), while this may be permitted during Pesukei Dezimrah, it is forbidden during Birchas K'rias Shema and Shema itself, because one is osek in the mitzvah of davening, and one is not permitted to interrupt, even for the sake of performing another important mitzvah.

Doing the Avodah. Let's review what the **Shulchan Aruch itself** (Orach Chayim 98:4) writes about **our daily Shemone Esrei, l'halacha l'maaseh:**

"Tefilla is in place of a korbon **and therefore** one must be careful that it is like a korbon:

- in kavanah, because improper thought invalidates a korbon;
- by standing when it is recited, as the avodah was done standing;
- in a certain place, as each korbon had a specific place for shechita and matan dam;
- with nothing interrupting between him and the wall, as with a korbon where a chatzizah could be posul;
- and it is befitting that a person has nice, special clothes for tefillah, just as there were special bigdei kehunah for the Avodah."

Note: At the very least, one should not enter to daven in the same attire as if he were about to play a golf game or repair something around the house.

Deep Knee Bends. It is well known that deep knee bends are a recommended method to improve one's physical flexibility. Chazal, however, never prescribed this exercise, especially during davening. When we bend our knees and bow our heads in Shemone Esrei, it is not intended as a physical exercise, but as a **mental** exercise. As we bow, the sefer *Shaarei Orah* (p. 39) writes, we should feel a pure and complete submission or servitude to HaKodosh Boruch Hu. This feeling of submission can be assisted by thinking about a **specific** benefit which HaKodosh Boruch Hu has bestowed upon you, which no one else can provide.

Introducing the Ezras Avoseinu Organization. Perhaps one of the most downtrodden Tefillos is the brocha in the morning after Shma and before Shemone Esrei. Apparently, because Shma takes a little longer, as does Shmone Esrei, less time may be allotted to this brocha. Yet, as the Mishne Berurah (Orach Chayim 70; seif katan 2) points out, the paragraph of Ezras Avoseinu contains a **Mitzvas Aseh D'oraysa** of remembering Yestzias Mitzrayim. You can take the lead in your shul to make that timespan between Emes V'Yatziv and Tehillos L'kel Elyon just a bit longer in order to say and mean the precious words of this brocha. This is your chance to be a leader of the Ezras Avoseinu Organization!

Note: If you are more of a nighttime person, you can try to do the same with the grand brocha of Hashkiveinu. Look at the words—V'Hogen Ba'adeinu V'Hoseir Mei'oleinu...--and shield us and remove from us enemies, disease, violent...Imagine the power of this tefilla if tens of thousands reignited it with just a little more meaning and feeling. As the Gemora (Rosh Hashana 18A) teaches, according to the level of kavana in tefilla is it accepted.

Additional Note: The sefer *Shaarei Orah* (pp 51-53) writes that there are three times a person will daven (aside from the regularly-scheduled Tefillos): 1) In a time of trouble R'L, 2) In order to thank Hashem for specific benefits he has been given (as the Posuk (Koheles 7:14) says, B'Yom Tova Heyeh B'Tov), 3) Prior to a t'zora (V'Hogen Ba'adeinu; please prevent me from getting sick...) We leave it to you to choose your time and place!

Yehei Shmei Rabbah. In a previous issue (Volume III, Number 3, Sivan 5763), we discussed the literally incomparable power of Yehei Shmei Rabbah. We recently heard that a Gadol in America was asked for a kabala to undertake by someone who needed a yeshua. The Gadol told him to begin answering “Amen Yehei Shmei Rabbah” **from inside a Siddur**. The person replied that he already answered carefully and out loud. The Gadol replied that by answering from inside a Siddur, he would eventually see a world of difference in the quality of his response. Postscript: The person got the yeshua he was desperately seeking.

An Aitza Tova. The Chofetz Chaim (in the Hakdoma to sefer *Shmiras Haloshon*) provides the following great recommendation for achieving a level of kavana in Shmone Esrei. Before each brocha, stop for a moment, and think for but a few seconds on what you are about to address in this brocha. Before the first brocha, for instance, think that you are about to give shevach to Hashem, who led the Avos, and does **everything**, and also that you are being mevarech Hashem for protecting Avraham Avinu then, and protecting us by extension. We passed on this idea to a sample of people—and they were very appreciative!

What Will Happen? It may be difficult for us to reflect upon what will actually happen when the Beis Hamikdosh is rebuilt. To help guide us, we can look to what we recite every day, three times a day: “Yehi Ratzon...Sheyibone Beis Hamikdosh...”

1. We will finally, completely attain “Chelkeynu B’Soresecha”—our share in Torah;
 2. We will finally attain “Na’avodcha Beyira”—the service of Hashem b’yirah on the level of previous times; and
 3. “V’orvah Lashem”—Hashem **will be pleased with** our offerings on the level of previous times.
- There is certainly much to look forward to—and much to intensely pray for—when reciting this Tefillah.

A Shocking Revelation. Tachnun at Shachris and at Mincha is not merely a portal linking Shmone Esrei to Aleinu. It is a crucial element of Tefilla. One needs only to focus on the personal, heartfelt words of this prayer, which is based upon the supplications of Dovid Hamelech. What is especially telling about the importance of Tachnun is that the Mishne Berurah (Orach Chayim 131; seif katan 17) is posek that on a day when Avinu Malkeinu (as we know, that very special tefilla originated by Rebbe Akiva) which would be said at Mincha (i.e., on the Aseres Yemei Teshuva or fast days), if there is not enough time to say both Avinu Malkeinu and Tachnun before Shkiya, one **can skip Avinu Malkeinu to recite Tachnun prior to Shkiya!** Let us properly value the strong power of our daily Tachnun!

Note: In a similar vein, one of the most intense Tefillos that we recite in Selichos during the Aseres Yemei Teshuva is “Shema Koleinu.” On Rosh Hashana an Yom Kippur one of the high points of our Tefillos is “Aleinu L’Shabeyach.” Yet, we are privileged to recite Shema Koleinu and Aleinu L’Shabeyach **three times daily!** Our daily opportunities abound and abound!

Strong, Stronger, Strongest. The sefer *Shaarei Orah* (p. 12) brings from the Alter of Slabodka Z’TL that the **strongest** Yetzer Horah is the Yetzer Horah against a person using his thoughts properly (“Le’Hishtamesh B’Koach HaMachshava”). Accordingly, the Alter says, the greatest Teshuvah that one can perform is on controlling his thoughts—and through this, his deeds will be converted.

Note: In a similar vein, the Rokeach (*Siddur Rokeach* p. 315) writes that the Ikur Nisayon of a person is in Kavana B’Tefila. The borrowed phrase in English for this Yesod is simple: Mind over matter. A person’s personal control over his thoughts can be measured at two key times of his day: While reciting Shmone Esrei, and while walking or traveling from place to place (as a person must realize that it is not only arriving at the destination that is part of his life—the trip getting there is also very precious, and an end in itself).

Small Talk Makes Big Churbanos. We sometimes pass by large buildings which were once shuls (as evidenced by various etchings and writings) and are now used for, in many cases, devorim temeim. This phenomenon can, of course, be explained demographically and sociologically. However, without judging and without involving ourselves in Hashem Yisborach’s cheshbonos, we bring the words of the Mishne Berurah (Orach Chayim 151; seif katan 1). “For they (Batei K’nesios and Batei Medrosos) are called a Mikdash Me’at... and the fear of the One Who Dwells there should be upon them; and the S’MAK wrote that because of the sin of **lightheadedness** in a Beis Haknesses, it is **overturned into a House of Avodah Zara**” The Mishne Berurah (*ibid.*, seif katan 2) adds that one who engages in forbidden activity in shul is R’L Mezalzel B’Kavod Ha’Shechina, and that there is **no comparison** between a sin (i.e., a violation of the King’s orders) done privately and a sin done in the

Palace of the King and in the presence of the King. If you see somebody shouting, telling a joke, engaging in small talk, or making calls on his cell phone in shul while waiting for a minyan, perhaps you can mention to him that you prefer not to change neighborhoods, or the like...

Note: The story is told about the previous [Alter] S'kvarer Rav Z'TL after a fire destroyed the Beis Hakneses, but did not touch the small room where he had a private minyan. When his Chassidim insisted it must be a miracle, the Rebbe denied it, explaining the occurrence as expected because those in his small minyan were scrupulous about the Kedushas Hamakom for Tefila.

You Are There. One of the crucial six zechiros recited daily is not to forget what our eyes saw and not to remove from our hearts the day we received the Torah on Har Sinai. A great way to accomplish this reminder is when we study Torah, we should feel that we are receiving it from Sinai at that very moment. Additionally, the Mishne Berurah (Orach Chayim 141: seif katan 15) writes that Kriyas HaTorah in shul is a special dugma of Kabolas HaTora, as the gabbai is calling to study the Torah as Hakodush Borch Hu did, the olah l'Torah is every member of K'lal Yisroel (who received the Torah), and the ba'al koreh is the dugma of Moshe Rabbeinu who relayed the Torah to each and every one of us. **YOU ARE THERE!** Accordingly, all those in the tzibur should appreciate the literally momentous occasion by following the laining closely and intently (Orach Chayim 146: Mishne Berurah seif katan 19).

That Special Link. When receiving an aliyah to the Torah, the after brocha is Asher Nosan Lonu Toras Emes, V'Chayei Olam Nota B'Socheynu. The Shulchan Aruch itself (Orach Chayim 139:10), quoting the Tur, actually explains the brocha for us: *Nosan Lonu Toras Emes* refers to Torah She'bichsav and *V'Chayei Olam Nota B'Socheynu* refers to Torah She'Bal Peh. We thus inextricably link Torah She'Bal Peh and Torah She'bichsav in the very brocha over Torah She'bichsav.

Earth to Torah. We are all awed by the remarkable biological and chemical phenomena that take place around us constantly. Plants release oxygen which we need to breathe; in turn, we release carbon dioxide which plants need to make oxygen. Water extinguishes fire. Gas and oil produce energy. One of the most remarkable systems is sometimes overlooked: From a droplet of water rising from the Earth, combining with other droplets, a cloud is formed. Rain then falls to the Earth, and days thereafter, grass sprouts. Grass is then eaten by sheep, which produce wool and meat. Wool clothes, and meat provides nutrition to our bodies, enabling our brain to function and study—and even be mechadesh Divrei Torah. What starts out as a droplet and becomes part of a cloud, ends up as a magnificent part of Talmud Torah! Perhaps this is a new insight into “Ein Mayim Eloh Torah” (Bava Kamma 17A). The true purpose and end result of a droplet of water—is Torah! (Based upon the teachings of Rabbi Avigdor Miller ZT'L.)

Netilas Yodayim Notes.

A. The Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chayim 158:9) writes the one must be careful with netilas yodayim, because anyone who treats netilas yodayim irreverently is deserving of excommunication, will become poor and will be removed from this world. From this, it is quite evident that netilas yodayim is much more than the cleansing of the hands.

B. The Mechaber (*ibid*, seif 10) writes that although the minimum shiur for netilas yodayim is a reviis (Mishne Berurah there, seif katan 37, adds that a reviis should preferably be poured on **each** hand), it is important to add much more than a reviis whenever possible, as Rav Chisda explained, “I would wash with an abundance of water, and I would be given an abundance of good.” Although the Mishne Berurah (*ibid*, seif katan 38) notes that we should not wash **in order to** become wealthy, but to give honor to Hashem Yisborach, one who is, in fact, careful to wash with much water, but does not become rich, must be doing other things wrong which are actually **preventing** his attaining wealth.

C. The Mishne Berurah (Orach Chayim 162, seif katan 9) writes that one should **not** behave like the hamon am (the multitudes) who, when washing netilas yodayim, pour water only on the sides of their hands. Instead, a person should be extremely careful that the water also reaches the tips of the fingers, all sides, and around the entire hand. The Biur Halacha (Orach Chayim 162, D”H V'ravi) writes that this is Midina D'Gemora, and that l'chatchila, one must wash each hand until the wrist and **not** only until the ends of the fingers. B'shas hadchak, one can be yotzei by washing the fingers entirely until the palms. Washing the ends of the fingers alone is never sufficient.

Order of Creation. The Chofetz Chaim (*Shem Olam*, Chapter 18) notes the apparently strange order of creation. First, Malochim were created, then animals, and only afterwards, man. Why this order? The Chofetz Chaim explains with a mashal. A townsman hired a wagon driver to take him to a large city by driving through the night. Both the driver and the passenger had eaten dinner just before departing, and both fell asleep shortly after the ride began. The horse was left to navigate its own course, and all ended up in a muddy ditch, overturned and injured, by the side of the road. Man is taught to aspire to the spiritual state of an angel during his trip through life, which is why angels were first created. However, if he gets comfortable and lets the animal within him, that secondary creation, steer his course for the trip, he will inevitably (some earlier than others) end up bruised, overturned and muddied in a deep ditch.

Take a Deep Breath. Do you know anyone who has had a tracheotomy? Who has been on a respirator? Who suffers from asthma? Who is prone to allergic reactions? The Medrash (Berishis Rabbah 14:9) provides a great insight into why Tehillim concludes with the final posuk (150:6) of “Kol HaNeshoma Tehallel Ka”—Dovid HaMelech’s final advice is Al Kol Neshima U’Neshima, for each and every breath—thank Hashem. Perhaps we can begin reciting this posuk slowly—and having this elemental thought in mind when reciting this posuk in Pesukei D’Zimra each morning. Indeed, it is no smaller wonder that it is the **only posuk that we immediately repeat a second time** in either Shachris, Mincha or Maariv! As Rabbi Frand, Shlita, teaches us, we should listen to our messages!

Watch Your Step. Chazal on the posuk “V’Hoya Eikev Tishmaun” (Devorim 7:12) teach us that the Mitzvos that a person treads upon—these are the mitzvos that surround a person at the time he is judged on High. It is no surprise then, that in the city, a person must be especially careful where he steps, because this posuk is an indication to us that in the city, a person’s steps are much more fraught with danger, physically **and** spiritually, than anywhere else. But the reason a person is placed in the city—and in a particular city—is for Hashem to watch him take just those careful steps. As the posuk (Iyov 34:21) clearly teaches “Ki Ainov Al Darchei Ish V’chol Tzeadov Yireh (For His Eyes are upon man’s ways, and He sees all his steps).”

Shabbos Notes.

A. In local neighborhoods, many posters, placards and signs are displayed prominently on lamp poles, walls, shul bulletin boards, etc. We caution against reading any of these advertisements on Shabbos, as some of these may constitute shtarey hedyotos or business materials (Orach Chayim, 307:13). Lest one think this is a “small matter”, we refer you to Orach Chayim 307:12 which prohibits a baal simcha to even refer to a guest list for his simcha on Shabbos, for fear that he too may come to record business items.

B. With respect to Hadlokus Neiros, we note that the sefer *Shmiras Shabbos K’Hilchoso* (43:3) writes that if a woman wants to reduce the size of the neiros she regularly lights (e.g., from a four-hour candle to a three-hour candle), she would require **Hatoras Nedorim** prior to doing so. Additionally, if a woman is required to light an extra candle because she neglected to light one week, she would be required to light the third candle even as a guest in someone else’s home, although as a guest, she is not lighting any of the other additional neiros she would otherwise light in her own home (*ibid.*, note 31).

C. According to the Sefer *The 39 Melachos* by Rabbi Dovid Ribiat, Shlita, (Vol. III; p 872), removing a Post-It (“stickem”) on Shabbos, or placing a Post-It to your place, especially if it is being placed or removed for an undetermined amount of time, is ossur. Removing it from the Post-It pad involves additional prohibitions (*ibid.*) Accordingly, care should be taken using this popular glue-based product on Shabbos, and a Posek should be consulted in particular circumstances.

Note: It would similarly not be permitted to separate two or more papers stapled or bound together, as this action may involve the prohibition of korea (See *Piskei Teshuvos*, Hilchos Shabbos, 340:20).

D. The sefer *Shmiras Shabbos K’Hilchoso* (20:84) writes that a notebook is not Muktza as a basis on Shabbos if it contains paper which is written upon and which may be read on Shabbos, even if it also contains paper that is blank. However one should avoid turning the pages of the blank paper, as they may be muktza. Similarly, HaRav Moshe Feinstein Z’TL (*Igros Moshe*, Orach Chayim 4:72) writes that blank writing paper is, in fact, muktza on Shabbos and Yom Tov.

E. It is forbidden to engage in any kind of conversation or activity which causes one pain or anguish on Shabbos (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 287, Mishne Berurah seif katan 2; Orach Chayim 306, Mishne Berurah seif katan 38).

F. The Mishne Berurah (Orach Chayim 299; seif katan 40) brings that the Maharil (one of the main sources of Minhagei Ashkenaz) would fold his Tallis after Havdalah in order to be involved immediately after Shabbos in a mitzvah. The sefer *Piskei Teshuvos* (Hilchos Shabbos, 299:8) additionally brings that one should fold his Tallis immediately after Shabbos for reasons al pi Kabbala, and also for halachic reasons—in order to demonstrate that the folding of his Talis on Shabbos was not an ordinary folding (which would be prohibited), but rather a temporary measure until after Shabbos.

G. After making the brocha on b'somim at Havdalah, one should be careful to smell the b'somim itself, and not merely the b'somim holder which has absorbed the fragrance of the b'somim. The Mishne Berurah (Orach Chayim 297, Mishne Berurah seif katan 10) brings from the Tur that Rabbeinu Ephraim had a special **glass** container for his b'somim. The *Shevet HaLevi* (5:35) writes that Rabbeinu Ephraim used glass and not wood or metal because glass does not absorb the besomim fragrance, as do wood and metal.

H. The Chayei Odom (Hilchos Shabbos 9:12) brings the following intensely powerful p'sak: "If one is mechalel Shabbos b'shogeg **even in an issur d'rabbanon, one should fast** forty (40) days, and if he cannot fast, he should give [tzedoka] in replacement of each day according to his means, as long as it is not less than 18 Polish Gedolim. Besides this, he should give to tzedoka equal to the minimum value of a sheep or goat because he would have had to bring a korbon chatos. **Note:** The replacement cost of a korbon chatos apparently refers to the violation b'shogeg of an issur d'oraysa, so that as a sinner, he should not benefit from the destruction of the Bais Hamikdosh.

The Mishne Berurah (Introduction to Volume 3-Hilchos Shabbos) writes that for a person to properly be Shomer Shabbos-the eitzta ha'yeutza (the best advice I can give) is for a person to study Hilchos Shabbos **and always review it** ("V'lachzor oleh'ho tomid") so that you know what is permissible and what is not, for all the Mussar relating to Shrimas Shabbos will not help you to know what to do if

- The Shabbos candles fall down on the table
- The flame goes out under the blech
- The refrigerator light was left on
- The cholent is smoking
- Your car or home alarm goes off

By studying some Hilchos Shabbos daily, aside from the obvious fruits of your study in properly observing Shabbos, you can fulfill the mitzvah aseh d'oraysa of Zachor es Yom HaShabbos L'kadsho!

Two Brachos. If one hears the conclusion to two (2) brachos simultaneously, he should answer "Amen V'Amen", having the appropriate kavana for each one. (Mishne Berurah, Orach Chayim 124; seif katan 25).

Kriyas Shma After Chatzos. In some shuls which provide the opportunity for minyan after minyan, the opportunity for Maariv extends well after chatzos halilah—until 1 or 2AM. We caution that the Mishne Berurah (Orach Chayim 235; seif katan 27) writes that Mi'Drabanan it is **ossur** to delay reading Kriyas Shma until after chatzos (because by delaying his recitation, one might then forget to recite Shma for the rest of the night), and one who delays reading Shma until after chatzos is called an **Over Al Divrei Chachomim**. Thus, those who, because of an emergency, must daven after chatzos must, at the very least, read Kriyas Shma before chatzos.

Kriyas Shema Al Hamitah. A Gadol recently remarked, "I don't understand some people. They come to see me dressed in their finest Shabbos garments, and they say Kriyas Shema Al Hamitah in their pajamas. Why don't they come to see me in their pajamas—and say Kriyas Shema Al Hamitah in their Shabbos clothes?" To many, the recital of prayers immediately prior to going to bed is difficult, because it involves staying up and focusing when one is beyond tired. However, the power of Kriyas Shema is enormous. So enormous that in a *Jewish Observer* article on HaRav M. Schwab Z'TL of Monsey, it reported that he would actually drink a cup of coffee if he felt he was too tired to properly recite these crucial bedtime tefillos.

Very Valuable to Whom? If an indigent person tells you he has a prized treasure to show you, how much do you think it may be worth—\$5,000? \$10,000? What if he was middle class—could it be worth \$500,000 or \$750,000? If he were wealthy—would the treasure be worth \$5 million or \$10 million? What if he were a king—\$50 million or \$100million? What if he was the King of Kings? The Gemora (Shabbos 88B) writes that HaKodesh Boruch Hu, the maker of, and King of, all Kings also has a prized treasure. What is it worth \$500 million? \$1 billion? No, far from it. It is the Torah, which was created 974 generations before the creation of the world and he gave it to each and every one of us—for keeps.

Correspondence From Our Readers.

A. “It is essential that we wholeheartedly reject the use of pejorative terminology to describe other races, especially since there are ever-increasing numbers of Jews, *Shomrei Torah u’Mitzvos*, of these races. We must be careful never to present people of such races as examples, *sui generis*, of degenerate and dim-witted behavior, particularly in light of the evident accomplishments and prominence of many individuals of these races. A special pitfall to be avoided is the acceptance of questionable “Biblical” justifications of such attitudes. Indeed, most of these rationalizations may be traced to Southern, pro-slavery, antebellum (pre-Civil War) Christian preachers. Firstly, these attitudes and modes of expression will not go unnoticed by general society. If they were to become known, they would likely lead to *Chillul Hashem* and to setbacks in our task of leading, by refined example, to “*yakiru v’yeidu kol yoshvei seivel ke lecha tichra kol berech.*” They certainly would not help the other races (nor gentiles in general) to recognize that “*rak am navon v’chacham ha’am ha’zeh.*” Secondly, *Olam ha’Bo* issues of *malbin pnei chaveiro* and explicit *d’oraysa* prohibitions of *ona’as ha’ger* are involved in such “slips of the tongue.” Perhaps most importantly, were such attitudes to take root in our society, *chas v’shalom*, they would clearly run counter to the refinement of *middos* and to the pathways of *mussar* to which every *Ben Aliyah* and *Ba’al Avodah* should aspire. Haughtiness (*ga’avah*), scoffing (*leitzanus*), derogation (*bittul*) and other *middos ra’os* pervade such attitudes. The *tumas sefasayim* that is inherent in such modes of expression doubtless impacts negatively on the *neshama* of the speaker...”

B. “I read with great interest in a previous issue how I could elevate my everyday meal times. I have actually embarked on something more introductory. When eating, I picture myself as an important person, as someone whom Hashem is watching, and so I cannot eat in the same manner as an animal. I have stopped putting too much into my mouth at once, eating sloppily, eating while standing, and eating just because the food is there. I think this is an important first step. Thank you for putting me on the right track.”

C. “When davening Al HaTzadikim, I personally think of our Gedolim and ask that Hashem give them the strength and health to lead us.”

D. “I heard that when somebody leaves his home, those around him should give him a brocha like ‘L’Chaim U’Lesholom.’ I decided that if nobody is around to give me the brocha, when I leave, I ask Hashem for the brocha and say ‘Hashem, please let me travel L’Chaim U’Lesholom.’”

E. A very upset reader writes: “I can’t believe it. I simply can’t believe it. This happens to me once a month. I receive a call from a Frum person to provide a service in their home, schedule an appointment, travel about 10 miles—and they are either not home and I leave, having wasted all this time and earned nothing—or their babysitter or maid is home and, after performing my service, I am not paid, but am told to send in a bill. I am not Verizon or AT&T. I have schar limud and rent and bills to pay daily. How hard it is to control my anger and disgust over so many people’s lack of seichel, middos, and, as I understand it, their violation of six Lo Sa’asehs. Please, please convey this to your readers, and ask them to tell their friends to be sensitive to the needs and feelings of the working man.”

F. “Thanks so much for making me pay attention to the proper brocha on cereals. I am now more careful, look at the label, and if I see something I don’t know about, like corn grits, wheat gluten, milled rice, I cover my brachos with other foods.”

G. “Thank you for your publication. What I have learned most from you though, was **not** anything actually written in any one of the Bulletins. Rather, it was that **I, too**, can think carefully about different parts of davening. I, too, can look up Halachos that apply to me everyday, and I, too, can be more careful about those things which apply to me and my family.”

H. “I am not a morbid person, but I want to pass along one thing which has helped me to daven better. I try to picture each Shemone Esrei before I daven as if it were my last. That this is the Shemone Esrei I am going to meet the Beis Din Shel Maaleh with. Hopefully, over time my Shemone Esrei will improve to the point that I will not need this outside inspiration.”

I. In your first issue, you wrote about raspberry and blackberry being infested, and cough syrup being unkosher. Are these still true. **Editor Response:** YES.

Your communication is most welcome.

The Eighteenth Letter. At the end of the Chofetz Chaim’s eighteenth published letter, he urges everyone to recite the Sheloshe Asar Ikarim (the Rambam’s 13 Principles of Faith) every day, as published in most siddurim. Upon review of these thirteen principles, it may seem astounding that the Chofetz Chaim made such a request. After all, these principles are so engrained within us from an early age—we know that Hashem Yisborach has no body, that all of the Torah was given to Moshe Rabbeinu at Har Sinai, that all the words of the Neviim are true etc. What is the point of reciting them? Perhaps the message is that we recite them not as habit or by heart (as we are taking off our Tefillin or the like), but with some level of thought and intent. For instance, if we could focus on the words from Principle 10 that “I believe with complete faith that the Creator...knows all of our deeds and thoughts...”, we would probably have a harder time sinning—at least during the morning hours! From time to time, we can change our reflection—what does it mean that the Torah was given at Sinai, or that Moshiach can come in the next ten minutes?

Only If You Are Having Trouble. We are all familiar with the *Mesilas Yeshorim* (Introduction) who writes that the avodah of every thinking person is to think about, and act upon, his purpose in this world. The *Mesilas Yeshorim* continues that our purpose here is threefold: 1) to serve Hashem as a servant serves his master, 2) to perform the Mitzvos, and 3) to stand in the face of Nisayon. Let us take what appears to be the easiest of these tasks—to perform the Mitzvos. Can you take a piece of paper and list all the Mitzvos Aseh and Mitzvos Lo Sa’aseh that one can consciously perform in **today’s times**? The Mishne Berurah (Orach Chayim 156: seif katan 4) urges us to study the mitzvos that apply to us daily in the *Sefer Chareidim* (which lists these mitzvos). The Chofetz Chaim himself (apparently later) published *The Sefer Hamitzvos Hakatzar*, listing these mitzvos. This sefer is available with an English translation from Feldheim Press under the title *The Concise Book of Mitzvos*.

Fear. As Malchus Esav would have it—“you have nothing to fear but fear itself.” We know better. In fact, it is said in the name of Reb Tzadok HaKohen Z’TL, that when a person experiences a pachad, a “tzitter,” he should immediately transform that feeling into Yiras Hashem, to a sense of proper fear and awe of Hakodosh Boruch Hu. While this may seem very difficult to accomplish, we should remember the posuk (Koheles 3:14) “V’HoElokim Osoh She’yivu Milfanav—And Hashem made this (which can also refer to Hashem causing you to fear something else) **in order to properly fear Him**.”

Mutav. We are familiar with the principle that “it is better not to warn somebody that he is doing an aveira unintentionally, lest he continue to do it and do the aveira intentionally (Mutav Sheyiheyu)”. There are several important qualifications of this principle (Orach Chayim 608; Mishne Berurah, seif katan 4, et al.):

1. This is true only if you are sure your words will not be accepted. If you are, however, in doubt about whether the person will accept your words, even on a Mitzvah D’Rabbonon, you must attempt to reprove him.
2. If the person knows it is forbidden (mezid), you must reprove him **even if you know** he will not accept your reproof.
3. If the mitzvah is written explicitly in the Torah, you must reprove him, even if it seems that he is violating it unintentionally, we must assume that he is aware of the issur, and is acting intentionally..
4. The obligation to reprove (e.g., for an intentional violation, or for one who violates an explicit Torah prohibition), also applies immediately in public, and one should not wait to reprove him privately (to avoid Chilul Hashem, *ibid.*, seif katan 10), and applies until one will be hit, cursed or otherwise put in danger.

At Least As... The sefer *Peleh Yoetz* notes that one goes to great lengths to ensure proper education for his children. Seforim, tuition, tutors, learning aides, study books. Why, then, will he not spend similar monies on

his **own** education and development? After all, do you not have a chiyuv to study Torah in the same way as your son? See Shluchan Aruch, Yoreh Deah 245:2.

Staying Clean. In the sefer *Tomer Devorah*, the classic Mussar work studied in Kelm during Elul, HaRav Moshe Kordevero Z'TL writes that one of the midos of Hashem is “V’nakeh”—he cleanses our sins. This being so, the Ramak concludes, a person should be simply too embarrassed to return to sin, because the King Himself, and not merely a servant or even a commoner, cleans off his filth! We note, however, that as the sefer *Shaarei Teshuva* (1:9) explains, Hashem’s level of cleansing depends on the level of teshuva actually accomplished. Thus, whether you look almost brand new, or clean but worn, depends solely on you. In any event, it should be embarrassing to be constantly returning for the same cleaning. Are you really that sloppy—even with your very own life?

Do You Have Clues? In our last issue (Volume III, Number 4, Elul 5763), we referred to potential avoda zara issues in holistic remedies. There are many remedies and healing techniques currently in use which could have their basis in real avoda zara. We ask our readers if they have any specific information regarding sources or methodologies of:

- Yoga/meditations
- Consegurity
- One Brain
- Bach Flower remedies (may also be unkosher)
- Healing Touch
- Reshi
- Reflexology
- Pendulum
- Kinesiology
- Tekken (magnets used for healing)

We note that although some remedies may appear herbal in nature, they may, in addition to avoda zara issues, have kashrus issues (contain brandy, lactose, etc.)

Did You Know I've Stopped Smoking? Rav A. Schwab told the following story about Rav Dessler that teaches us an important lesson about how to compel ourselves to repent, even where it is very hard. Before the health hazards of smoking became public knowledge, Rav Dessler used to smoke. It happened that I went to see him on the day that the dangers of smoking were first publicized. The Mashgiach greeted me warmly, as usual, and asked, “Did you know that I’ve stopped smoking?” Some time later, another talmid went to see him and Rav Dessler also told him that he’d stopped smoking. He told the same thing to the tens of talmidim who went to see him in the course of the following days. His intention was simple. When someone tells a large number of other people that he’s stopped smoking, even if his desire to smoke later gets the better of him, it will be very uncomfortable for him to lapse. He thus provides himself with strong peer pressure, enabling him to break even a strong habit like smoking. This can serve as an easy and efficient way of repenting for sins that we have been guilty of transgressing repeatedly, that weigh on us heavily and are very hard to break away from. (Reprinted from the *Yated Neiman*)

At the Fair. The Chofetz Chaim (*Mishlei Chofetz Chaim*) teaches that, although he may very much enjoy food and drink, when an experienced merchant goes to the annual fair, he does not spend more than a few required moments taking care of these physical necessities, and instead utilizes almost all of his precious time at the fair engaging in new transactions which will support him financially for the rest of the year. This world is that very same opportunity but on a much grander scale—because from this world you support yourself for eternity. Let us spend our time here as an experienced merchant—and be especially focused on our future success.

The Burning Desire. Did you ever get burned by a match or by touching something hot? Chazal teach that the fire of this world is only **one-sixtieth** of the fire of Gehinnom. The sefer *Pele Yoetz* (under “K’viyah”) adds that a person who is judged in Gehinnom has his soul burned seven times a day (four times at night, and three during the day). Over the course of a year of judgment, this amounts to approximately 2,000 times (not including Shabbos and Yom Tov) that the soul experiences this incredible inferno. At a very minimum, the conclusion is that sin does not pay.

Jobbers. The Dubno Maggid brings the mashal of two employees working for the same factory owner. One punches in exactly at 9:00AM and punches out exactly at 5:00PM. The other is there before 8:00AM and leaves more than twelve hours later. The difference? The latter is the boss' son who loves his father and wants to make his father happy, by putting in all the spirit, time and effort necessary to accomplish his goal. This is all the more so when the business is not going well, and his father is upset. The Gemora (Brachos 3A) teaches us that since the Churban Bayis Sheni, Hakodesh Boruch Hu anthropomorphically "roars like a lion" and bemoans his Beis Hamikdosh. Should we not, too, feel the pain of our Father and try to make Him happy? How can we accomplish this? By putting in the extra feeling, time and effort necessary to turn around the business. Of particular note is that spirit, or hargosha, is something that cannot really be taught, but developed. When we read or learn about mitzvos that we cannot currently perform (such as Bikurim, M'chiyas Amalek, and the scores of mitzvos relating to Kodshim and Taharos), we should take a few moments to long for them, to show our Father that He is not alone in His desire to turn things around. (How about saying "Vesechezenu Eineinu" with heartfelt kavanah, and "Yehi Ratzon...Sheyibone Beis Hamikdosh" with emotion or tears?) Secondly, we should try to choose at least one mitzvah which we feel is not being given its proper due because of a prevalent 9-5 attitude and demonstrate your love, caring and feeling for it.

Note: An outstanding story is brought about Rebbe Yisroel Salanter Z'TL who spent significant time with a simple, elderly poor man advising him of all the merits of learning in Kollel. Reb Yisroel was questioned by his students as to the necessity of talking to him about this—after all, the man was poor and could not support anyone in Kollel, and was simple and elderly and himself not prepared for Kollel study. Reb Yisroel responded beautifully as follows: "I wanted this man to have a feeling and a desire, a longing, to learn in or support a Kollel. Obviously, he does not have the actual means to do either, but to HaKodosh Boruch Hu, he has fulfilled whatever he could by his feelings, desires and longings. It is for this reason that I spent the time I did with him."

At a Hakhel shiur, Rabbi Herschel Zolty, Shlita, Rosh Yeshiva in Yeshivas Mir (Brooklyn) pointed out from the posuk in Yeshaya 29:13 "Vatehi Yirosom Osi Mitzvas Anashim Milumada (And their fear of Me was by rote)", that **even fear** of Hashem can become routine! We should find a mitzvah which may seem neglected and uniquely energize ourselves in its performance—or at least in a longing to perform it.

Note: We received a very positive response to our prior Bulletins and we thank all those who have given us chizuk in this matter. If you would like a copy of one or all of our prior Bulletins please send a self-addressed, stamped envelope for each Bulletin requested to Hakhel, 1327 East 26th Street, Brooklyn, NY 11210

A current Hakhel tape list is available by calling 718-252-5274 or writing to Hakhel at the address above.

* * *

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